

REMARKS

In the Office Action mailed on January 21, 2005 by the United States Patent and Trademark Office, the Examiner allowed claims 20-37, objected to claim 15, and rejected claims 14 and 16-19. Claims 1-13 were previously cancelled. Claims 14, 16, 20, 21, 26, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 35, and 37 have been amended, in part, to clarify that the steps recited therein may be performed in any sequence. After entry of this response, claims 14-37 are now pending in the above-identified patent application. Reconsideration is respectfully requested in light of the above amendments and the following remarks. The following remarks are believed to be fully responsive to the Office Action mailed January 21, 2005 and render all pending claims at issue patentably distinct over the cited references.

I. CLAIM REJECTION UNDER 35 USC § 103

Claims 14 and 16-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,106,662 issued to Bibby Jr. et al. on August 22, 2000 (hereinafter referred to as "Bibby") and in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,700,180 to Sandhu et al. (hereinafter referred to as "Sandhu"). The Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Newly amended independent claim 14 relates to a method for planarizing a front surface of a wafer and recites, *inter alia*, analyzing a plurality of reflected light signals from a plurality of concentric bands and altering a planarization process based on the analysis by independently modifying a parameter of the planarization process in selected ones of said plurality of concentric bands.

Bibby teaches an apparatus to generate an endpoint signal to control the polishing of thin films on a semiconductor wafer surface and includes a through-hole in a polish pad, a light source, a fiber optic cable, a light sensor, and a computer. See Abstract. The fiber optic cable propagates the light through the through-hole opening to illuminate the surface as a pad assembly orbits and a chuck rotates. See id. The light sensor receives reflected light from the surface through the fiber optic cable and generates reflected spectral data. See id. The computer receives the reflected spectral data and calculates an endpoint signal.

See id. The computer compares the endpoint signal to predetermined criteria and stops the polishing process when the endpoint signal meets the predetermined criteria. See id.

Sandhu discloses a system for polishing a semiconductor wafer comprising a wafer polishing assembly for polishing a face of a semiconductor wafer at a polishing rate and a polishing uniformity, the wafer polishing assembly including a platen subassembly defining a polishing area, and a polishing head selectively supporting a semiconductor wafer and holding a face of the semiconductor wafer in contact with the platen subassembly to polish the wafer face. See Abstract. The polishing head has pressure applicators for applying various localized pressures on individual regions of the semiconductor wafer to cause the semiconductor wafer to conform the wafer face to a selected contour. See col. 3, ll. 51-59.

However, neither Bibby nor Sandhu disclose altering a planarization process based on the analysis of the reflected light signals by *independently modifying a parameter of the planarization process in selected ones of said plurality of concentric bands*.

The three basic criteria necessary to establish a prima facie case of obviousness are: (1) there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or combine reference teachings, (2) there must be a reasonable expectation of success, and (3) the prior art reference or references must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. However, as previously noted, neither Bibby nor Sandhu, alone or in combination disclose all the claim limitations of at least independent claim 14. Accordingly, as Bibby and Sandhu fail to disclose, either explicitly or inherently, at least the above-noted element of claim 14 and the Examiner has failed to provide such an explicit or inherent disclosure of this element, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of these claims and the claims that depend therefrom is improper and the Applicants request withdrawal of the § 103 rejection.

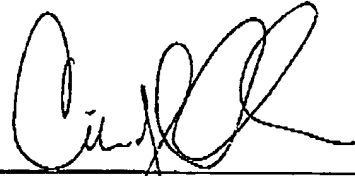
II. CONCLUSION

In view of Applicants' remarks, it is respectfully submitted that Examiner's rejections under 35 USC § 103, have been overcome. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully submit that the application is in condition for allowance, and such allowance is therefore earnestly

requested. Should the Examiner have any questions or wish to further discuss this application, Applicants request that the Examiner contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

If for some reason Applicants have not requested a sufficient extension and/or have not paid a sufficient fee for this response and/or for the extension necessary to prevent abandonment on this application, please consider this as a request for an extension for the required time period and/or authorization to charge Deposit Account No. 50-2091 for any fee which may be due.

Respectfully submitted,



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